

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA NUMBER: OR105-95-16

BLM Office: South Douglas Resource Area, Roseburg District.
Proposed Action Title: Plus Tree Cleaning.
Location of Proposed Action. South Douglas Resource Area.

Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan:

This proposed action conforms to the Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan dated, June 1995. (ROD/RMP)

Need for Proposed Action:

The BLM has established seed orchards for Douglas-fir and sugar pine. These orchards are not yet established to the point where they are producing sufficient seed for our reforestation work. It will be 5 to 10 years before these orchards are beginning to produce enough seed to reforest the "regen harvest units". Until such time it is necessary to maintain plus trees in a healthy condition where they can produce adequate cones to provide the seed for reforestation. Also the taller shrubs and trees provide a pathway for squirrels to reach the selected trees and harvest the cones before we can collect them. Removing the competing shrubs and trees will remove this path way and also accomplish the goal of maintaining healthy productive trees.

Description of Proposed Action:

The South Douglas Resource Area proposes to clean around approximately 114 Douglas-fir, 12 rust resistant sugar pine, 34 ponderosa pine and 1 Jeffrey pine plus trees located in General Forest Management and Connectivity areas. Cleaning would remove competing trees within a radius of up to 35 feet of the plus tree. The diameters of the trees to be removed range from 6" dbh to approximately 40" dbh. The average diameter is about 14 inches. The number of trees that would be cut on each site range from 1 to 23 with the average number of trees cut per site being approximately 10 trees.

The genetics or tree improvement program has been an ongoing program for over 25 years. All the trees that are currently identified as plus trees were selected before the current RMP was initiated and riparian reserves established. Approximately 59 of the trees that would be cleaned are within riparian reserve areas. To comply with riparian reserve directives and the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, where there is a lack of down woody debris in the riparian reserves, some of the felled trees would be left on site to enhance this component of the stand.

Twenty of the trees are a considerable distance from roads and skid trails and would require the construction of new roads. The trees felled on these sites will be left on site as down woody debris. Cleaning of these sites would be accomplished by using

BLM personnel to fall the trees.

One hundred forty one sites are close to roads or old skid trails which could be utilized to remove the timber. Cleaning of these sites would be accomplished through timber sale contracts.

Environmental Impacts of the proposed action:

<u>Critical Elements</u>	<u>Potentially Affected</u>	
	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Air Quality	X	
ACECs	X	
Cultural Resources		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	X	
Floodplains	X	
Nat. Amer. Rel. Concerns	X	
T & E Species		X
Waste, Hazardous/Solid	X	
Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X	
Wilderness	X	

Description of Potential Impacts/Mitigation:

Cultural Resources. Several of the trees in this project are located on known archeological sites. Falling the competing trees around the plus trees on these sites could be done without damage to the sites. Yarding the felled timber, however, could cause disturbance. Falling of the competing trees around plus tree nos. 4097, 4504, 6006, 6007, 6008, and 6009 would be allowed and the felled trees would be left on the site. Yarding would be prohibited on these areas to preclude any disturbance to the archeological site. If new archeological sites are encountered during the course of cleaning around any of the plus trees, harvesting activities would be suspended around the site until an evaluation of the site and a recommendation is made.

T & E Species. Three of the plus trees to be cleaned around are located in the core area of two northern spotted owl sites. Clearing around two trees in the Dead Middleman site will remove 17 trees and result in two small openings of approximately 0.06 acres each. Eight trees will be harvested from the Daybreak site resulting in an opening of approximately 0.06 acres. A new spotted owl site was found in the Days Creek area this past summer. Two plus trees are located next to the tree where the owls were found. Cleaning around these two plus trees would remove seven trees. Because of the scattered nature and small size of harvest area around a plus tree, habitat function will not be adversely impacted. These sites will continue to be monitored and any changes in the status that would affect these

plus trees will be brought forward and the recommendations of the wildlife biologist followed. Clearing around plus trees 4527, 2027, 4507, 4094, and 4096 would occur prior to March 1 or after the sites have been cleared for spotted owl nesting. We would retain the ability to restrict season of operation should it become necessary to limit the season for logging.

Thirty of the plus trees out of the 161 selected trees are located within the 50 mile inland range of the marbled murrelet. Based on the stand conditions of the selected plus trees none of the trees are considered suitable murrelet habitat. The two year survey protocol for marbled murrelet use for any of the 30 plus trees has not been attempted. However, based on habitat conditions alone the harvest around the plus trees is not thought to have an adverse impact on the murrelet or its habitat. Ability to restrict season of operation if needed will be retained.

Riparian Reserves. Fifty Nine of the plus trees are located in Riparian reserves. The felling of trees around the plus trees will reduce the canopy closure in the vicinity of the plus tree. Since the area being cleared around each plus tree is small and the trees are scattered throughout the resource area there would be no significant impact to any stream or draw. The small openings created around the plus trees will have no significant impact on stream temperature, increased flows, or water quality.

In all areas including riparian reserves Best Management Practices (ROD/BMP) will be followed (Appendix D, ROD/RMP pages 130 - 131). Trees would be felled in the direction of yarding to avoid excessive soil disturbance. Existing roads and existing skid trails would be used for yarding the felled timber. Dirt roads and skid trails would be waterbarred upon completion of the use of that road or skid trail. Use of dirt roads and skid trails would be restricted to the dry season of the year.

The Aquatic Conservation Strategy (RMP pgs. 19, 20) sets objectives for maintaining and restoring the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems on public lands. One of the objectives is to maintain and restore the species composition and structural diversity of plant communities in riparian zones. In the riparian reserves where down woody debris is insufficient, a suitable tree over 24 inches at dbh or the largest tree to be felled around a specific plus tree would be left to supplement the down woody debris component. In stream structure may be lacking in some streams. Where possible, trees would be felled to span stream channels to provide instream structure and sediment storage in the future.

There are fifty nine trees located in riparian reserves. The trees are scattered over the entire resource area and the cleared area around any one tree is less than 1/10 acre. No impacts to stream morphology or riparian function are expected as a result of this action.

Agencies and Persons Consulted.

US Fish and Wildlife Service
State Historic Preservation Office

Preparers

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Environmental Assessment prepared by:

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Thomas M Katwyk

Date: _____

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD.

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, June 1995. It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation

Measures/Remarks None



Alan Wood
Area Manager

10-26-95

Date